

HEGEL AND 1914

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The lectures here published were first delivered at the Johns Hopkins University in 1906 under the title “Aspects of Post-Kantian Idealism.” They were, in their present form at least, not originally intended for publication, but a note, dated 1907, found among Professor Royce’s manuscripts mentions these “Baltimore Lectures” as material “worth publishing.” This entitles them to head

¹ Jacob Loewenberg 1882-1969, “Editor’s Preface,” *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, Josiah Royce, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1919, vii-xii; Jacob Loewenberg, *Hegel and 1914*, Christopher Richard Wade Dettling, editor, archive.org, 2016.

the list of his posthumous works. Written as they were for oral delivery the lectures required much revision; the editor hopes he has not used his pen too freely.

The subject-matter of these lectures is one that, in a more biographical way, has already been treated in *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*. The present exposition of post-Kantian idealism, however, is by no means a repetition of the former one. In the earlier book, in which the charm and the depth of Royce's writing reach perhaps their happiest union, the interest is general rather than technical, the tone is popular rather than professional. It contains a rapid survey and not a detailed analysis of the period in question. Yet no other work of his exhibits perhaps in the same degree "the glory of words," the art of vivid phrasing, the gift of graphic and pleasing metaphor, the skill of forcing subtle and difficult ideas into luminous and concrete expression. It is indeed one of the finest feats of Royce's reflective [viii] imagination. As a work of deep speculation touched with warm feeling, of historical research cast in original mould, the book has a unique and permanent place in our philosophic literature.

To literary distinction such as the *Spirit of Modern Philosophy* possesses the present lectures can evidently lay no claim. In range and depth, however, they surpass the chronicle of the same period in the earlier volume. There we have but a brief recital of the main phases of post-Kantian doctrine, here an examination of its historical foundation, its logical roots, its human as well as its technical motives. The selection of topics is here more rigorous and the interest more prevailingly theoretical. Moreover, what is here deliberately avoided is the familiar and conventional reproduction of post-Kantian thought. The usual method of the usual textbooks is here not repeated. In vain do we here look for the hackneyed themes of a hundred histories of philosophy. Royce does not seek the successors of Kant in the obvious tracts of ideas. He searches for them in the neglected aspects, the buried documents, the forgotten theses. These reveal to him the true meaning of their teachings; these disclose to him the spirit of the post-Kantian movement. In the early works of Schelling, for instance, Royce finds the pulse of the dialectical method, and in the *Phenomenology* rather than in the *Logic* he

discovers the soul of Hegel.² And, though the present study is wanting in completeness, there is no shirking of the most difficult problems but rather a choosing of them and a discussion of them with a power, adequacy and clearness which, as we look about, Royce alone seemed able to summon to such a task.

We have particular reason to value at this moment a [ix] dispassionate estimate of that phase of philosophy which, like German music, must suffer through the retrospective judgment of the war. During the present generation it seems difficult to approach without prejudice the products of German genius. The war may

² See: "Hegel tried to show how, on a Kantian basis, the world of human passion can be explained, and how we can escape from what we called the prison of the inner life, and prove ourselves to be in the world of the infinite spirit ... not even Hegel could really get into the charmed circle of the empirical sciences, and construct the facts of nature upon the postulates of idealism. He attempted this after a certain limited fashion, as Schelling had attempted it; but he failed ... I do not, however, think that Hegel has told the whole truth about the Self." Josiah Royce 1855-1916, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy: An Essay in the Form of Lectures*, New York, 1892, 268-305. [Editor]

be said to have created a “German problem.”³ Shall we condemn and approve uncritically? A double evaluation of Germany seems at first natural enough. Why not condemn her war and her war lords, and admire her philosophy? Unfortunately the boundary between her war and her philosophy is not easy to define. The treacherous onslaught upon the peace of the world in

³ See: “Let national culture grasp the hand of the state and in its hand become a weapon in a spirit of lofty inspiration, with that independent ethical impulse which Kant revealed to us. Then it shall appear that even at the time when such devotion to the state was an unconscious act, culture unknown to itself cherished and ennobled its protector. For, all that in a nation strives toward the light of the spirit, helps to give the nation life and vigor ... The Prussian army-law of 1814 was an expression of German idealism and Kantian philosophy. This is well known to whoever is familiar with the memoirs and early history of its originators. By the aid of universal military service they wished to pass beyond the stage of blind, mechanical obedience among the army, they sought for nobler, more spiritual incentives and aimed at a fulfillment of patriotic duty by the strength of moral freedom and inspired self-sacrifice. It is true that in so doing they overestimated the power of these incentives in the daily life of the people, and also conflicted with the technical and military spirit of realism characteristic of the professional Prussian officer.” Friedrich Meinecke 1862-1954, *The Warfare of a Nation: Lectures and Essays*, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1915, 37-49. [Editor]

1914 was no isolated phenomenon. It was the outcome of a definite theory of life.⁴

The hypothesis of continuity in German culture—a culture largely fashioned by technical philosophy—was one which during the war had its protagonists alike among defenders and opponents of Germany. The apologist apologized for all things German; in the eyes of the accuser everything Teutonic appeared tainted. It was not enough to find Germany guilty of this iniquitous war, the guilt must be fixed upon her whole past civilization.⁵

⁴ Lucien Herr 1864-1926: “The triumphant swiftness of Prussia’s rise is inevitably the result of the Hegelian philosophy: Hegelianism was the officially imposed doctrine of the Prussian regime, while Hegel himself had no qualms with using the complacent authority of the State against dissidents. But it is not true that Hegel put his philosophy in the service of Prussian authoritarianism out of complacency and servility. The authoritarian monarchy and bureaucracy of the Prussian restoration appeared to Hegel, if not as the symbol, at least as the government best adapted to the political doctrines of his philosophical system.” Charles Philippe Théodore Andler 1866-1933, *Le pangermanisme philosophique, 1800 à 1917*, Paris, 1917, 37. [Editor]

⁵ See: “In our history of the idea of *raison d’état*, Machiavelli, Frederick the Great and Hegel stand out as the three most prominent figures ... on glancing at Kant ... one sees that the really permanent

Similarly, it was not sufficient to appreciate her past admirable achievements, her deeds in the war must also, since they were German, be the embodiments of the same admirable qualities. The major premise was the same in both cases. Beginning with the assumption of a continuous German civilization, one concluded that it was either continuously bad or continuously good. Germany's past was made responsible for her present crimes; or her present iniquities were cleansed in the stream of her glorious past. Thus it happened that the idealism of Kant, of Fichte, of Hegel became a matter of passionate denunciation or apology. And the books [x] on German philosophy written during the war, instinct as they are with a partisan spirit, can have scarcely more than an ephemeral value.⁶

German ideas on the subject of the State had remained thoroughly un-Machiavellian." Friedrich Meinecke, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'État and Its Place in Modern History*, New Haven, 1962, 366-393. [Editor]

⁶ Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte*, München, 1924; Hermann Heller, *Hegel und der nationale Machtstaatsgedanke in Deutschland: Ein Beitrag zur politischen Geistesgeschichte*, Tübingen, 1921; Franz Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der*

An unbiased and trustworthy study of German idealism is, therefore, a most notable bequest to the present bewildered generation. It is all the more notable as coming from one who was destined to articulate the American conscience at a time of moral perplexity. He who could with such profound sympathy interpret German thought showed no hesitancy in characterizing Germany as “the wilful and deliberate enemy of the human race” when she, in his opinion, assumed that rôle. Germany was thus judged, not by one who disparaged or belittled, but by one who knew and cherished the ideals of her past. Indeed, this very attitude of sympathy towards German civilization of the past intensified his righteous indignation. The rejection and betrayal of her own ideals constituted for Royce the crime of recent Germany. Because of his deep appreciation of German

Staat, München/Berlin, 1920; Charles Andler, *Le pangermanisme philosophique, 1800 à 1917*, Paris, 1917; Johann Plenge, *1789 und 1914: Die symbolischen Jahre in der Geschichte des politischen Geistes*, Berlin, 1916; Plenge, *Marx und Hegel*, Tübingen, 1911.
[Editor]

idealism he was inevitably led to denounce the denial of it by the German state.⁷

The view of the post-Kantian self or Absolute, as interpreted by Royce, throws light on the discrepancy between the earlier idealism and humanism of Germany and her later realism and militarism.⁸ The post-Kantian

⁷ See: “And to Hegel’s vision, to name an absolute idealist, there leads no other path than the negative path. His *Phenomenology of Spirit*—called by Hegel himself his “Voyage of Discovery”—consists of a series of progressive purgations—necessary rungs on the ladder which leads up to his own philosophic vision.” Jacob Loewenberg, “Mysticism and Idealism,” *University of California Chronicle*, 18.1(1915): 15. [Editor]

⁸ See: “We are bidden by Kant to witness perhaps the greatest tragedy imaginable, the tragedy of a deep and never-ending struggle of mind with its own antinomies ... Hegel’s account of things in terms of an Absolute, from the point of view of which whatever happens is seen to be indispensable to make the universe as spiritual as it possibly could be, what is it ultimately but a defense of the tautological assertion that “whatever is, is,” and a warrant for the noxious belief that “whatever is, is right? ... Hegel’s account is not at all incongruous with the language of the crassest realism. His [Hegel’s] logic is a sort of *Reallogik*; just as his exaltation of the political state favors a notorious *Realpolitik*.” Jacob Loewenberg, “The Apotheosis of Mind

Absolute is no national or tribal deity. “The post-Kantian idealism,” Royce summarizes at the close of Lecture II, “was noteworthy in its analysis of the conditions of knowledge. But ... it was still more noteworthy in its development of social concepts, and in its decidedly fruitful study of the relations which bind the individual self to that unity of selfhood which includes all individuals.”⁹ *The unity of selfhood which includes [xi] all individuals*—this was the post-Kantian ideal; and this ideal of her classic philosophers modern Germany chose to betray. The eternal values which in Kant and his successors possess universal meaning and dignity were cozened by the imperial state into a degrading tribal

in Modern Idealism,” *The Philosophical Review*, 31.3(May, 1922): 223-226. [Editor]

⁹ Josiah Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, New Haven, 1919, 54-55. See: “[Hegel] was a thoroughly anti-critical, anti-revolutionary philosopher ... Hegel’s teaching had been taken up by the Left in a one-sided and abstract way; and the great majority of people always prefer what one can become fanatical about, and this is never anything but what is abstract.” Johann Eduard Erdmann 1805-1892, *A History of Philosophy: German Philosophy Since Hegel*, 4th German edition, vol. 3, London, 1899, 66-81. [Editor]

service.¹⁰ Thus, what one may perhaps venture to call a Social Absolute, universal and super-national in its significance, must be contrasted with the political and national absolutism that dominated latter-day Germany. When and how a spiritual social order, viewed as a universal community, became transformed into a bureaucratic imperial state is a matter of detailed historical study. That Hegel's later doctrines, mutilated and perverted, contributed not a little to the process of Germany's self-estrangement is common knowledge. The merit of Royce's lectures on Hegel consists in replacing the "bureaucratic" tradition which has long occupied the field in discussions of Hegel, both popular and professional, by a more adequate interpretation.¹¹

¹⁰ See: "I believe that Hegel was too much of a critical philosopher to want to undo Kant's Copernican Revolution ... the speculative theologians have never grasped the crucial significance of Kant in Hegel's development." Henry Sifton Harris 1926-2007, "The Hegel Renaissance in the Anglo-Saxon World Since 1945," *The Owl of Minerva*, 15.1(Fall, 1983): 78-84. [Editor]

¹¹ See: "Everything in the world—be it a religious cult or a logical category, a human passion or a scientific law—is, so Hegel holds, the result of a process which involves the overcoming of a negative element. Without such an element to overcome, the world would

The “World-Spirit” of Hegel’s philosophy, as Royce shows, is indeed destined to assume, in its “transmigrations,” incomplete and defective forms, which must be transcended. That the state, however, in all its phases, from its provincial to its most imperialistic manifestations, is one of the defective forms to be transcended, is Hegel’s explicit teaching upon which Royce, in his analysis of the *Phenomenology*, has laid sufficient stress. For the early Hegel the state is an inevitable stage but not the goal of human progress.

The view of the post-Kantian Absolute as a universal community is not without interest for Royce’s mental

indeed be an inert and irrational affair ... According to his [Hegel’s] doctrine, the individual as individual is meaningless. The particular— independent and unrelated—is an abstraction. The isolation of anything results in contradiction. It is only the whole that animates and gives meaning to the individual and the particular. This idea of subordinating the individual to universal ends, as embodied particularly in Hegel’s theory of the State, has left its impress upon political, social, and economic theories of his century.” Jacob Loewenberg, “The Life of Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel,” *The German Classics of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Masterpieces of German Literature*, vol. 7, New York, 1913, 4-14. [Editor]

biography. His own doctrine of the community, though on its epistemological side intimately bound up with Peirce's theory of interpretation, is metaphysically [xii] not unrelated to the post-Kantian notion of a social Absolute. The social motive is Royce's most characteristic motive. It inspired most of his independent and original thinking. And it is the same motive which accounts in no small measure for his intellectual attachment to the idealism of Kant's successors.¹²

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¹² See: "*Pseudo-Hegelianism and anti-Hegelianism* thus squares both Kant and Hegel in order to prove the *speculative logical and dialectical system of the genuine Hegel's philosophical science of Absolute Idealism* is flawed. *Irrationalism* thus *perverts the history of philosophy and modern Europe*, especially that of the early 20th century ... *Pseudo-Hegelianism and anti-Hegelianism* is therefore the *political and economic mask of modern European Raison d'État*." Christopher Richard Wade Dettling, *Americanism: The New Hegelian Orthodoxy*, revised edition, archive.org, 2016, 3-5. [Editor]